

## **Construction ahead: UDOT, construction crews prepare for I-15 CORE in Utah County**

By Laura Hancock

Deseret News

Published: Monday, March 29, 2010 9:49 p.m. MDT

LEHI — UDOT kicked off its massive construction project in Utah County on Monday without the usual attire, tools and details.

But Gov. Gary Herbert told about 250 workers representing some 30 companies to wear hard hats and be safe when they begin the project, called I-15 Core, in the next 15 to 30 days.

"I encourage you to take pride in your work," he said to the gathering at Thanksgiving Point. "What you are doing is really, really important."

Somewhat similar to the I-15 reconstruction in Salt Lake County prior to the 2002 Winter Olympics, I-15 Core is a reconstruction of 24 miles of freeway in Utah County, from Lehi Main Street to a mile south of Spanish Fork Main Street. I-15 Core will bring two new travel lanes in both directions, 10 new and improved interchanges and a widening of 55 bridges.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that Utah County had 530,000 residents in 2008. By 2020, the governor expects 725,000 residents and the freeway reconstruction is necessary to accommodate the growth, Herbert said.

"Transportation is a key issue when it comes to fostering economic opportunity," Herbert said. "It's not just a quality-of-life thing. We all hate congestion but it is the ability for our private sector to get from one point to the next."

The project will cost \$1.7 billion, paid for with bonds the state issued last year, and it is the largest project undertaken by the Utah Department of Transportation, UDOT executive director John Njord said.

UDOT awarded the contract to a consortium of construction companies known collectively as Provo River Constructors.

For now, crews are doing some shoulder and utility work. "We're in the process of bringing people in," said Tuhr Barnes, Provo River Constructors project director. "It will really pick up in May and June."

This summer, there will be about 600 workers. Next year, there will be 1,000. That doesn't include suppliers and fabricators for details such as fencing and retaining walls, Barens said

"My guide is 3-1," Barnes said. "For every one in the field, we have three in the background."

Chris Jorgensen of Lehi now has a job, thanks to I-15 Core.

The drainage engineer lost his job in December and in January got on with Jacobs Engineering Group, Inc., part of the Provo River consortium.

"I'm working on drainage near Proctor Lane, it's north of 1600 North (in Lindon)," he said, explaining he has to make sure water doesn't flood the street when it rains.

When Jorgensen was laid off, he briefly considered moving out of state to try to find work. But nationwide, the construction industry has contracted. Decreased economic activity has made less money available for building, as businesses are only now starting to expand and state coffers have less tax revenues.

"I knew this was coming," he said about I-15 Core. "And this was my best chance to get a job, actually, in all the country."

Construction will begin in earnest in mid-April or the first part of May. A construction schedule will be released next week.

UDOT expects by June of 2012, the northern portion of the project — from Lehi Main to Pleasant Grove — will be completed. By December 2012, the southern portion — from Pleasant Grove to Spanish Fork — will be completed.

e-mail: [lhancock@desnews.com](mailto:lhancock@desnews.com)

© 2010 Deseret News Publishing Company | All rights reserved





